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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, July 16, 2021, at 9 a.m.

Senate

THURSDAY, JULY 15, 2021

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

God of mercy and light, we are in Your hands and rejoice because of the power of Your presence.

Lord, we are grateful that You have promised never to leave us. In the challenge of decision making, with its fluctuating intricacies, give each lawmaker a deeper appreciation for cultivating a conscience void of offense toward You and humanity.

Today, show mercy to the Members of this legislative body. Lord, let Your sovereign hand be over them, and Your Holy Spirit be with them, directing all their thoughts, words, and works for Your glory.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of J. Nellie Liang, of Maryland, to be an Under Secretary of the Treasury.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. ROSEN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ROSEN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

AMERICAN JOBS AND FAMILIES PLAN

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, every Senator, from every State, has witnessed the hollowing out of the middle class over the past few decades. Globalization and technology have

changed the way that Americans work and compete. Productivity increased, but wages for the bottom 70 percent stagnated in this century, in this 20 years. Income equality spiked as wealth agglomerated to the top.

The financial crisis and the COVID pandemic heaped additional hardship on middle-class families that were already falling behind. The changes in the world—the swirling changes, economic and social—have made it harder to stay in the middle class and have made it harder to get to the middle class.

We Democrats feel an obligation to make it easier for those in the middle class to enjoy that middle-class life and stay there and for those struggling to get into the middle class to have those ladders so they can climb up to get there.

These are exciting and fundamental times to be here in the Senate. In short, we have a lot to do to restore the fundamental American promise of opportunity and economic mobility—the faith that, through hard work, any American can build a better life for themselves, their families, their children, and then pass even greater opportunity on to their children. That is the American dream. It has been fading, and that has allowed demagoguery and nastiness and divisiveness to become too great a part of our politics.

We want to restore that sunny optimism that Americans have always had, and that is why we are so intent on moving forward this month. The idea that Americans can build a better life for themselves and pass greater opportunity to their children is at the heart

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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of what Democrats are trying to achieve this year through the American Jobs and Families Plan, helping middle-class families stay in the middle class and breathe easier and helping poorer Americans climb that ladder to get there.

And nothing—nothing—will do more to advance that goal than the bill we are working on this year. The budget resolution agreed to by Democrats on the Budget Committee this week is the first step down a long road toward enacting a transformational change in our economy. It will allow us to pass the most significant legislation to expand support for American families since the era of the New Deal and the Great Society. If not quite Rooseveltian in scope, it is certainly near Rooseveltian. It is dramatic change to help average families do better.

The best way to understand the emerging legislation is in three broad categories: jobs, which will come through major infrastructure investments; families; and climate. We are going to create thousands upon thousands of good-paying jobs by investing in infrastructure and the training and apprenticeships that will help more Americans, including many of those who have been left out, get those jobs.

We are going to expand and strengthen the programs that support American families and introduce new ones, like paid family leave and a robust expansion of Medicaid to cover vision, dental, and hearing. I salute Senator SANDERS for putting it on the map and now making it a real possibility to happen.

And we are going to act on climate in a bold and comprehensive way, to reduce emissions, make our infrastructure more resilient, and create the green jobs of the future to meet the President's goals of an 80-percent reduction in dirty carbon that goes into energy production and a 50-percent overall reduction in the carbon we send to the atmosphere.

When Republicans held the majority in the Senate, unfortunately, their signature legislative achievement was a massive tax break for corporations and the wealthy. From one report I read, the top 1 percent got 83 percent of the benefits when the Republicans had power. What a difference when Democrats are in power. You know what the top 1 percent got in the ARP bill? Zero. Nada. Nothing.

God bless them. They are doing great. They don't need it.

Democrats, instead, are strengthening the backbone of the middle class, and that is what we are going to do in this jobs and family plan. American workers, American families are going to benefit while we address the generational challenge of climate change.

And as I have said from the start, Madam President—as I have said from the start—the two tracks of infrastructure are going to move in tandem. We are making good progress on both tracks.

We in the Democratic caucus heard from the President yesterday on the budget resolution. The meeting was wonderful. The excitement was palpable. The opportunity to do so much good for so many American families was in the air in that meeting. It was exciting. And, as that happened, the bipartisan working groups had many meetings on the bipartisan infrastructure framework as well.

Today, I am announcing that I intend to file cloture on the vehicle for a bipartisan infrastructure bill on Monday of next week. Senators will have until Wednesday of next week before the initial vote on cloture on the motion to proceed.

Everyone has been having productive conversations, and it is important to keep the two-track process moving. All parties involved in the bipartisan infrastructure bill talks must now finalize their agreement so that the Senate can begin considering that legislation next week.

And I am setting the same deadline, next Wednesday, for the entire Senate Democratic caucus to agree to move forward on the budget resolution with reconciliation instructions. The time has come to make progress, and we will. We must.

CANNABIS ADMINISTRATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

Madam President, now on another issue, marijuana. 20 years ago, roughly a third of the population supported the decriminalization of marijuana. Today that number is almost 70 percent. Even deep-rooted South Dakota voted to legalize the adult use of marijuana.

Americans' perception of marijuana has, justifiably, changed, and it is time that Congress caught up and reformed our laws to reflect the popular wisdom and the science. So, yesterday, I joined with Senator BOOKER, who has been such a leader on this issue for so long, and Chairman WYDEN, who has been active on this issue as well, our Finance chairman, to introduce the Cannabis Administration and Opportunity Act, which represents a monumental change because, at long last, it would take steps to right the wrongs of the failed War on Drugs. It would remove marijuana from the Federal list of controlled substances and expunge the criminal records of those with low-level marijuana offenses.

Many States are rapidly moving toward legalization, including my home State of New York. The legislature did that in this past session. These States show the potential for new industries that can give opportunities to long-forgotten entrepreneurs. Our law would establish fair administration so small businesses and communities of color can get their fair shake in the marijuana business.

And we would deal with expungement—the tragedy of a young person being arrested because they had a small amount of marijuana in their pocket but, because of the historic overcriminalization, they have a per-

manent, serious criminal record that prevents them, inhibits them from moving forward in their lives.

Now, I am the first majority leader to say it is time to end the Federal prohibition on marijuana, and as majority leader I am going to push this issue forward and make it a priority for the Senate.

In short, the Cannabis Administration and Opportunity Act would help the Federal Government catch up with what much of the country already understands, that we need to rethink our approach to marijuana and end—end—decades of overcriminalization.

CHILD TAX CREDIT

Madam President, on a final matter, the CTC, I have a little chart here. Over the past 20 years, the cost of raising children in America has become ludicrously expensive. Everything—from diapers to housing, to healthcare, to college tuition—has risen in price, some of it rather steeply and dramatically.

Wages, unfortunately, have not kept pace, putting strain—ever more strain—on American parents. The cost of childcare alone can be roughly equivalent to buying a new car every single year. That is a big burden for so many families.

The pandemic, of course, made life even harder on America's families. So, in the American Rescue Plan, Democrats made sure that it included a dramatic expansion of the Federal child tax credit, to give families a little extra help during the once-in-a-century crisis.

And today—today—I am very proud to announce that tens of millions of Americans are going to see extra money land in their bank accounts, the first of monthly checks that will be disbursed through the expanded child tax credit. Let me say that again. Because of this law passed by Senate Democrats—sadly, unfortunately, not a single Republican voted for this much needed measure that will help the middle class and the poor—a vast majority of Americans, because of what we did, what we Senate Democrats did, will begin receiving a monthly check of \$300 for each child under 6 years old, and they will also receive \$250 every month for each child between 6 and 17.

Combined with the credits that apply next tax season, these payments total up to \$3,600 for every child under 6 and \$3,000 for every child 6 to 17. In short, it will amount to a substantial and potentially life-altering tax cut—tax cut—for American families.

If you are a middle-class mom or dad, this money will help defer the cost of groceries, rent, childcare, and maybe diapers, if you have an infant. Boy, they are expensive. I remember when my kids were little, compared to today, the cost. You can spend that money on something else if you need it, and it is going to go a long way to reducing the burdens that families face.

It also helps those kids in poverty. The expanded child tax credit will cut